

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02111 150726Z  
ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 SS-15 SP-02 CIAE-00 NSAE-00  
HA-05 MCT-01 PM-05 DODE-00 /049 W  
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P R 141603Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2111

FOR INR/RNA

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, PLO, SY  
SUBJECT: PLO REPRESENTATION IN SYRIA

REF: STATE 91578

1. THE PLO HAS HAD A PRESENCE HERE SINCE 1963. IT PRESENTLY MAINTAINS A REPRESENTATION OFFICE IN DAMASCUS HEADED BY MAHMUD KHALIDI. KHALIDI'S OPERATION, HOWEVER, IS OVERSHADOWED BY THE PRESENCE OF A HOST OF OTHER PLO OFFICES AND GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS HERE FALLING UNDER THE PLO RUBRIC. THE PLO POLITICAL DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS UNDER WHOSE AEGIS ALL PLO REPRESENTATIVES COME IS LOCATED IN DAMASCUS. FARUK QADDUMI, WHO IS THE PLO'S "FOREIGN MINISTER" IS NOT RESIDENT HERE, BUT THE DAY TO DAY ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES ARE HANDLED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S DIRECTOR-GENERAL ABEL AL-RAZZAK YAHIA AND HIS DEPUTY SAMIH AL-SHAAHID WHO SUPERVISE A LARGE STAFF.

2. A NUMBER OF PLO EXCOMM MEMBERS ALSO RESIDE, PART OR  
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 02111 150726Z

ALL OF THE TIME, IN DAMASCUS. THESE INCLUDE ABD AL-MUHSIN ABU MAYZAR, EXCOMM SPOKESMAN AND DIRECTOR OF PAN-ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL REALTIONS DEPARTMENT; MUHAMMAD ZUHDI NASHASHIBI, DIRECTOR OF THE PLO EXCOMM'S SECRETARIAT AND ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT; ZUHAIR MUHSIN, DIRECTOR OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENT AND LEADER OF THE PRO-SYRIAN SAIQA GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION; WALID QAMHAWI, DIRECTOR OF THE PALESTINE

NATIONAL FUND; HABIB QAHWAJI, EDITOR OF AL-ARD (THE LAND); AND HAMID ABU SITTAH, DIRECTOR OF THE ARAB HOMELAND AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ABDALLAH HAURANI AND TALAL NAJI ALSO LIVE HERE.

3. ADDITIONALLY, A NUMBER OF CONSTITUENT PLO GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS MAINTAIN OFFICES AND TRAINING FACILITIES IN SYRIA. SAIQA, OF COURSE, IS PREDOMINANT GIVEN ITS SYRIAN BAATH SPONSORSHIP. TWO OF ITS SENIOR CENTRAL COMMAND MEMBERS, ZUHAIR MUHSIN AND SAMI AL-ATTARI, ARE MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN BAATH'S NATIONAL COMMAND. HASAN AJAJ IS ANOTHER SAIQA CENTRAL COMMAND MEMBER HERE, BUT WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON OTHER MEMBERS. THE COMMANDER OF SAIQA'S MILITARY DEPARTMENT AS OF FEBRUARY 1976 WAS COL. FUAD MISBAH UMRAN. WE DO NOT KNOW IF HE STILL OCCUPIES THAT POSITION AFTER SAIQA'S POOR SHOWING AGAINST OTHER FEDAYEEN GROUPS IN EARLY JUNE 1976 IN LEBANON.

4. PRIOR TO JUNE 1976, FATAH MAINTAINED EXTENSIVE LOGISTICAL AND TRAINING FACILITIES IN SYRIA. THESE WERE CLOSED AFTER SYRO-PLO FIGHTING COMMENCED IN JUNE 1976 BUT BY DECEMBER 1977 REPORTS WERE CIRCULATING THAT SYRIA WAS RELAXING ITS RESTRICTIONS ON THE ORGANIZATION. SOME FATAH MEMBERS REMAINED IN SYRIA EVEN DURING THEIR ORGANIZATION'S FIGHT WITH THE SYRIANS. THE TWO MOST VISIBLE FATAH CENTRAL COMMAND MEMBERS RESIDING HERE ARE MUHAMMAD GHUNAIM (ABU MAHIR) AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 02111 150726Z

MAHMUD ABBAS (ABU MAZIN). OTHER FATAH OFFICIALS HERE ARE MUHAMMAD AHMAD DAYAAT, DIRECTOR OF FATAH'S DAMASCUS INFORMATION OFFICE; SULAIMAN ABU QUSH, DIRECTOR OF LOCAL FINANCIAL OPERATIONS; AND MUKHTAR SABRI, WHO HEADS THE LOCAL FATAH SECURITY OFFICE. KHALIL AL-WAZIR (ABU JIHAD) WHO REPORTEDLY IS EITHER THE NUMBER TWO OR THREE MAN IN FATAH, MAINTAINS AN OFFICE IN THE BARAMKE SECTION OF DAMASCUS FOR PLANNING MILITARY AND GUERRILLA OPERATIONS. THIS OFFICE WAS ROCKED FROM THE HORN OF A PARKED CAR IN FEBRUARY. WAZIR, HOWEVER, IS USUALLY IN LEBANON.

5. OTHER GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAVE SOME REPRESENTATION HERE ARE THE DPFLP, THE PFLP-GC, AND FATAH AL-THAWRA. SALIH RIF-AT IS THE MOST PROMINENT DPFLP MEMBER HERE. AS PREVIOUSLY STATED WE ARE UNCERTAIN IF TALAL NAJI OF JABRIL'S PFLP-GC LIVES HERE BUT, CERTAINLY, IT HAS HIGH-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES HERE GIVEN JABRIL'S CLOSE TIES TO ASSAD AND SYRIA. SEVERAL LEADING FATAH AL-THAWRA MEMBERS WERE ASSASSINATED IN LEBANON SOME WEEKS AGO AND LITTLE SINCE HAS BEEN HEARD OF THIS ORGANIZATION WHICH IS ALMOST CERTAINLY A CREATURE OF SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE MEANT TO KEEP ARAFAT OFF BALANCE.

6. THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY WHICH NOMINALLY COMES UNDER THE COMMAND OF YASSIR ARAFAT HAS TWO OF ITS THREE BRIGADES (HITTIN AND QUDASIYYAH) STATIONED HERE, ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE TROOPS DEFECTED TO THE FEDAYEEN WHEN THE SARG TRIED TO EMPLOY THEM AGAINST THEIR FELLOW PALESTINIANS IN 1976. MISBAH BUDAYRI REMAINS THE COMMANDER ALTHOUGH ARAFAT HAS ATTEMPTED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO RELIEVE HIM. DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE PLA AND THE FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM "SPECIAL STUDY--PALESTINIAN MILITARY FORCES" PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1976 BY THE UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES COMMAND INTELLIGENCE GROUP.

7. THE PLO SUPPORTS IN DAMASCUS A NUMBER OF POPULAR ORGAIP  
TIONS INCLUDING THE GENERAL UNION OF PALESTINIAN  
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PAGE 04 DAMASC 02111 150726Z

STUDENTS (GUPS) AND SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS FOR WORKERS, WOMEN, WRITERS, ETC. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE GENERAL UNION OF WORKERS, SABRI AL-BADRI, RESIDES IN DAMASCUS. ALL BUT THE WRITERS UNION COSED DOWN OPERATIONS AFTER JUNE 1976, BUT WE HAVE RECENT REPORTS THAT THE VARIOUS UNIONS ARE BEING REACTIVATED.

8. FINALLY, PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM LIVES IN SYRIA AND SUPERVISES A SMALL PNC SECRETARIAT. FAHUM PRESIDES OVER PERIODIC PALESTINE CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD HERE. ONE OF TWO DEPUTY PNC CHAIRMEN, MAHMUD TIM OF SAIQA, MAY ALSO RESIDE HERE.

9. GIVEN THE PLETHORA OF PLO OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF ITS CONSTITUENT ORGANIZATIONS RESIDENT HERE, WE ARE UNABLE TO STATE WITH ANY CERTAINTY THE PRIVILEGES GRANTED THEM OR THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED UPON THEM. ALL PLO OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF FAVORED GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS APPEAR TO ENJOY A HIGH DEGREE OF FREEDOM TO TRAVEL, CONDUCT THEIR BUSINESS, AND MEET WITH SYRIANS AND FOREIGNERS. EACH APPROVED ORGANIZATION IN ADDITION TO MAINTAINING AN OFFICE IS ALLOWED TO OPERATE AT LEAST TWO SAFE HOUSES. ORGANIZATION LEADERS ARE ALLOWED PERSONAL BODYGUARDS AS WELL AS PERSONAL WEAPONS. UNDOUBTEDLY, THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE CLOSELY MONITORED BY SYRIAN AUTHORITIES, BUT EVEN DURING THE SYRO-PLO FIGHTING THOSE OFFICIALS WHO REMAINED HERE WERE NOT ARRESTED OR OTHERWISE HARASSED ALTHOUGH MOST KEPT A LOW PROFILE. THIS IS LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE PRO-SYRIAN ATTITUDES OF MOST SUCH PLO OFFICIALS.

10. DUE TO THE SHORT DEADLINE FOR ANSWERING REFTTEL AND THE SENSITIVITY OF INQUIRING OVERTLY ABOUT THE SUBJECT MATTER, WE REALIZE SOME GAPS MAY EXIST IN THE INFORMATION REQUESTED. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS SUBJECT AND REPORT  
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PAGE 05 DAMASC 02111 150726Z

PROMPTLY ANY FURTHER INFORMATION.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014